

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: June 14, 2018

Agenda Item: 2018/2019 Furbearer & Trapping Seasons and 2018 Quotas

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 20 minutes

Background: Furbearer season structure and quotas are defined by the F&W Commission. Proposed changes for 2018/2019 are addressed below. All other season elements and quotas are proposed as unchanged from 2017/2018.

- Region 3: Decrease bobcat quota from 250 to 150.

Region 3 is proposing this change because both the juvenile:adult ratio and the number of bobcats caught per day are declining, likely indicating a declining population. Also, trappers are reporting concerns about fewer bobcats and observing fewer rabbits, the bobcats' main prey. A detailed justification for the above proposed change is in the commission packet.

FWP is proposing to clarify the definition of a center swivel on the underside of a ground-set foothold trap to be swivel within 5 chain links from the trap and the chain/swivel connected to the underside of the trap as close to the center as trap design reasonably allows.

FWP is also proposing to clarify the language about trapping within 1000' of occupied dwellings. Below is the current language with the proposed new sentence highlighted.

Occupied Dwellings – Ground sets, including all snares, are prohibited within 1000 feet of an occupied dwelling without written notification of the occupant(s). **This requirement does not apply to live cage traps or mouse and rat traps.**

FWP is also asking the Commission to approve for public comment the draft swift fox conservation strategy. This document promotes swift fox conservation and management by formulating a statewide strategy that facilitates coordinated and effective efforts on the part of interested organizations. This includes development and use of the best available science and promotion of efficient allocation of resources based on common priorities.

FWP will also update the Commission on a multi-state wolverine project and the fisher survey to take place this winter.

Public Involvement Process & Results: Regional FWP staff attends annual district meetings of the Montana Trappers Association each spring. The public comment period for any proposal approved for public comment will run through 5 p.m., Sunday, July 15, with any final adoptions at the August 9 commission meeting.

Alternative and Analysis: Proposals provide sound furbearer management to include trapping with consideration of comments and concerns from other user groups. The intent is to reasonably *share* the landscape, associated resources and opportunities to the extent possible.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: Recommend maintaining 2017 structure and quotas except for the proposed changes above. This is consistent with existing information and represents reasonable and appropriate consideration of user groups and the continued presence of contemporary data in furbearer management that include trapping.

Proposed Motion

I move to approve for public comment the proposed 2018/2019 furbearer season structure, regulation and quota changes as proposed by the department, and to approve the swift fox conservation strategy for public comment.